

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus comprising:
  - a first signal path for signals that are encoded at a first encoding rate comprising:
    - a first despreader;
    - a second despreader coupled to the first despreader;
    - a first de-interleaver coupled to the second despreader;
    - a first branch metric determiner coupled to the first de-interleaver,wherein the first branch metric determiner outputs first branch metrics utilizing a first encoding scheme;
  - a second signal path for signals that are encoded at a second encoding rate comprising:
    - a third despreader;
    - a fourth despreader coupled to the third despreader;
    - a second de-interleaver coupled to the fourth despreader;
    - a second branch metric determiner coupled to the second de-interleaver, wherein the second branch metric determiner outputs second branch metrics utilizing a second encoding scheme; and
  - a combiner having the first and the second branch metrics as an input and outputting combined branch metrics of the first and the second encoding schemes.
2. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the first despreader despreads data transmitted from a first base station.
3. (Original) The apparatus of claim 2 wherein the third despreader despreads data transmitted from a second base station.
4. (Cancelled)
5. (Cancelled)
6. (Currently Amended) An apparatus comprising:
  - a first branch metric generator having a first plurality of symbols that are encoded at a first encoding rate as an input and outputting first branch metrics for the first plurality of symbols;

a second branch metric generator having a second plurality of symbols that are encoded at a second encoding rate as an input and outputting second branch metrics for the second plurality of symbols; and

a combiner having the first and the second branch metrics as an input and outputting combined branch metrics of the first and the second encoding rates.

7. (Original) The apparatus of claim 6 wherein the first plurality of symbols differ in number from the second plurality of symbols.

8. (Canceled)

9. (Original) The apparatus of claim 6 wherein the first plurality of symbols where transmitted by a first base station and the second plurality of symbols where transmitted by a second base station.

10. (Original) The apparatus of claim 6 further comprising:

a logic unit having the first and the second plurality of symbols as an input and outputting the symbols with zeros inserted at various time periods.

11. (Currently Amended) A method for receiving a plurality of signals, wherein each signal of the plurality of signals employs a different encoding rate comprising the steps of:

receiving a first plurality of symbols that are encoded at a first encoded rate;  
generating first branch metrics for the first plurality of symbols;  
receiving a second plurality of symbols that are encoded at a second encoded rate;  
generating second branch metrics for the second plurality of symbols; and  
combining the first and the second branch metrics; and  
outputting combined branch metrics of the first and the second encoding rates.

12. (Canceled)

13. (Canceled)

14. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 wherein the first plurality of symbols where are transmitted by a first base station.

15. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14 wherein the second plurality of symbols are transmitted by a second base station.
16. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 11 wherein the first branch metrics are branch metrics derived utilizing a first convolutional encoding scheme.
17. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 17 wherein the second branch metrics are branch metrics derived utilizing a second convolutional encoding scheme.
18. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 6 wherein the first branch metrics are branch metrics derived utilizing a first convolutional encoding scheme.
19. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 18 wherein the second branch metrics are branch metrics derived utilizing a second convolutional encoding scheme.